

NEWS > LOCAL NEWS

Humboldt County food bank struggles to meet needs

By [THE TIMES-STANDARD](#) |

PUBLISHED: March 19, 2020 at 8:10 a.m. | UPDATED: March 19, 2020 at 8:31 a.m.

From a Food for People press release:

Eureka, CA – The recent COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent efforts to stall the spread have come at a particularly difficult time for Food for People as just days ago a city sewage inundation at their Eureka headquarters and distribution center left the food bank struggling to find solutions.



More people than ever people are turning to the Food Bank to get through these difficult times as many community members face lost wages and small business experience declining revenues. While schools have done an excellent job stepping up to ensure meals are provided to their students during school closures, families with very young children, seniors and others who are vulnerable will require more support than ever. The economic repercussions of social distancing are likely to have long term effects that will make the Food Bank's continued services critical in the coming months. Food for People has been closely monitoring the evolving COVID-19 situation and been working hard to keep programs running and implement safety measures. To help prevent the spread of disease, proactive steps have been taken including pre-packing food bags, implementing drive through distributions where possible, expanding the use of proxy pick-ups, and increasing space for people to practice "social distancing" while at distributions. Food banks across the nation play key roles on the front lines of these emergencies and Food for People's facilities loss from the recent sewage inundation could not have come at a worse time.

Food for People's main structure, located at 307 W. 14th Street in Eureka, not only housed Food for People's Eureka Choice Pantry, it included cold storage and warehousing that stored a significant amount of food and served as the hub for all of the Food Bank's countywide food distribution services, which include 18 hunger relief programs. The city sewer inundation that occurred on February 28th flooded Food for People's main building with sewer water resulting in a loss of more than \$47,000 worth of food, over \$80,000 in structural damage, and extensive costs for equipment, property loss, mitigation, and transition costs. All told, Food for People has been advised the costs may amount to upwards of \$300,000. While working through the insurance claim, at present, the insurer has agreed to cover only \$30,000 of the damages, but negotiations are ongoing. This represents just 10% of the costs Food for People will be required to pay in the coming months.

Major work is required before Food for People will be able to occupy the building again. Staff is in the process of moving all operations out of the damaged building and relocating to two temporary locations including a leased warehouse space and the City of Eureka's old Chamber of Commerce building (2112 Broadway St. Eureka) which will temporarily host the Eureka Choice Pantry until the city finalizes sale of the property to another entity.



Finding replacement cold and dry storage, and dealing with the immediate fallout of the damages sustained to Food for People's building is vitally important at this time. Currently, staff is focused on finding solutions to the loss of more than 6,000 square feet of cold and dry storage which poses a significant challenge as Food for People works to address the community's need for food assistance during the COVID-19 emergency.

As we all grapple with the strain recent events have put on our community now is a wonderful time to help Food for People as they work to recoup and meet the need in our county. Donations can be made at www.foodforpeople.org. For more information about how you can help, contact Carly Robbins, Development Director, at (707) 445-3166 ext. 306.

FAQs

1. What does Food for People do? As the official Food Bank for Humboldt County, Food for People serves 12,000 individuals monthly – programs include a network of 17 countywide food pantries, remote produce distributions, child and senior nutrition programs, nutrition education, advocacy, and emergency food response. In addition, Food for People provides food directly to well over 100 community partners who serve low-income community members.



1. Is Food for People operating and offering programming now? Food for People has been able to resume basic operations out of two temporary locations including a leased warehouse space and the City of Eureka's old Chamber of Commerce building which will host the Eureka Choice Pantry until the city finalizes sale of the building to another entity. Other distributions throughout the county continue. Many distribution models are modifying to safely serve those in need during the COVID-19 emergency.
2. Won't insurance cover the damages? At this point, the insurance company is only offering to pay roughly 10% of the actual costs incurred due to the sewer malfunction. Food for People will be fulfilling its responsibility to explore all appropriate options to cover the damages. Food for People is far away from recouping the funds that will be needed to address this immediate crisis.
3. How can people support Food for People right now? Food for People has seen encouraging support since the disaster, and is grateful for the donations we have received from generous community members who have already come forward. In light of additional need from the sewage disaster and additional unanticipated burden on the agency due to the COVID-19 emergency, those that are able to help can donate by visiting www.foodforpeople.org or calling Development Director Carly Robbins at (707) 445-3166 ext. 306.

Care about your community? We do, too.

Sign up for our Morning Report newsletter

Enter your email

SIGN UP

Tags: **Coronavirus**



**The Times-
Standard**



